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ABSTRACT

The purposes of the school management training project were to study the outcome of experimental activities in the field of school management training; to describe the various forms of training occurring in the different training sectors; and to study the outcome of these various forms of training. The two-year training consisted of training courses, periods of home study, and community practice. Basic principles and desirable effects were formulated and later evaluated by the participants. Areas of focus were participant control, cooperation, interchange of experience, work-relieving measures, variegated and activating working procedures, studies by each trainee of his own school, a problem-solving attitude, links between training courses and home study periods, contact with the local community, contact with the training team, and the ability to give and take criticism. Desirable effects were transformation of personality, of the vocational role, and of the individual school. While a majority of respondents stated that they had personally experienced behavioral and attitudinal changes, only half felt that positive change had occurred in their professional role or in their schools. Nonetheless, the participants were generally satisfied and felt that the training had been meaningful. (Author/JK)

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Newsletter
SCHOOL RESEARCH

September 1980 Concluded project 1980:4

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BACKGROUND

In the spring of 1976 the Riksdag resolved in favour of the establishment of school management training on the lines recommended by the Commission on the Planning of Training for All School Management (the PLUS Commission). The PLUS Commission's recommendations, which are closely geared to the everyday duties of school management, were considered to incorporate the ideas put forward in the recommendations made by the SIA Commission (i.e. the Commission on the Internal Work of Schools). The training thus proposed was to be combined with practical community training, and it was resolved that school management were to spend two practice periods participating in typical municipal activities and in some other branch of municipal activities for children and young persons. As from 1976, the designation PLUS was dispensed with and replaced by SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TRAINING.

PURPOSES OF THE PROJECT

The project had the following purposes:

To study the outcome of experimental activities in the field of school management training.

To describe the various forms of training occurring in the different training sectors.

To study the outcome of these various forms of training.

These were the main purposes governing the activities of the project. Other tasks were added, partly in order to provide a frame of reference for the principal assignment. These additional tasks were as follows:

- A Survey and scrutiny of training programmes displaying affinity with Swedish school management training.

- A survey of other training for school management.

- An analysis of the role of the school manager as personnel manager.

THE ORGANIZATION OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TRAINING

The organization of school management training provides a point of departure for the evaluative work presented. This training is intended for school management (i.e. headmasters and directors of education) in elementary schools, upper secondary schools, municipal adult education and special schools. Other participant groups include chief education officers, heads of municipal schools of music and principals of folk high schools.

Training lasts for two years and comprises training courses, periods of home study and community practice. The courses last for a total of 25 days. A policy resolution adopted in 1976 provides that school management participating in this training scheme are to be given a 10 per cent work load reduction during home study periods. This reduction corresponds to about 35 working days during the two-year training period. Community practice is divided into two periods of a fortnight each. During one of these periods school managers participate in a typical local activity, while during the second they participate in other branches of municipal activity on behalf of children and young persons.

The National Board of Education (NBE) is the sole sponsor of this training and as such is responsible for planning, direction, evaluation and development. The NBE has established a consultative group whose tasks are of a more generalized nature. Matters of a day-to-day character are attended to by a permanent

working group which, as the executive arm of the consulative group, collaborates with the various training teams. In view of the scope and scale of the training, it was proposed that training teams in each of the eight training areas should be put in charge of the planning and conduct of training activities.

THE AIMS OF SCHOOL MANAGEMENT TRAINING

School management training should be viewed as one of several instruments for the enhancement of goal achievement in the school system. The focus of attention, therefore, is on the development of the individual school. The aim of the training is to establish an awareness of the activities of schools and an endeavour to reduce the gap between school activities as they exist today and the nature of acitivities as envisaged in policy instruments. Indirectly, therefore, the aim of the training is to help the members of the school community in this respect.

The direct assistance rendered to schools comprises the training received by their managers. The following goals and guidelines have been adopted:

- The participants are to deepen their knowledge of the goals of school and discuss the implications of these goals and the way in which they are achieved.

- The participants are to improve their self-knowledge and their knowledge of interpersonal relations.

- The participants are to develop a determination to co-operate with other personnel and with their students in devising courses of action and laying the foundations of active development in school whereby each individual can influence his own situation and enjoy opportunities of development.

-Each participant is to participate substantially in the planning and testing of the training and its content, as well as experiencing and thereby undergoing training in a democratic working procedure.

- Together with personnel, the participants are to promote co-operation between schools and the community at large.

- Together with school personnel and students, the participants are to subject the everyday activities of schools to a critical appraisal and in this way assess their working routines.

These goals and guidelines reflect a bid for co-operation and democracy and for closer links with the local community. In order for these aims to be achieved, the participants must be involved in the planning, conduct and evaluation of their training.

Within the framework of the organizational development which has commenced, the school manager will be trained as an agent of change, and in practising this role he must exercise democratic leadership, i.e. leadership combining technical knowledge, capacity for interaction and an awareness of the expectations of the community.

IMPLEMENTATION

Evaluation work began with an analysis of the goal documents produced within the framework of the training. Among other things this material includes the publications issued by the PLUS Commission. This analysis yielded a number of basic principles and desirable effects for the training.

To simplify the task of comprehending the organization and content of the training, the project members also participated in counselling seminars (meetings of the permanent working

group together with individual training teams or several training teams simultaneously) and in the concluding training courses for the 1976 and 1977 training groups. In addition, members of the permanent working group and of the training teams were interviewed. The project team also had the advantage of being able to observe the everyday routine of school management by accompanying a number of school managers during an ordinary working day. This work occupied the period between September 1977 and December 1978.

During this period a questionnaire was compiled to elucidate principles and desirable effects. The basic principles formulated were: participant control, co-operation, interchange of experience, work-relieving measures. variegated and activating working procedures, studies by each trainee of his own school, a problem-solving attitude, links between training courses and home study periods, contact with the local community, contact with the training team and ability to give and take criticism. The desirable effects were: transformation of personality, the vocational role and the individual school. The questionnaire was distributed to 670 school managers throughout the country, 76 per cent of whom replied. The school managers taking part were those whose training was concluded in 1978.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The evaluation covers principles defining the training and making it the training it was intended to be. This approach makes it possible to say something as to whether the training has functioned in the manner intended.

The evaluation also includes a description of the effects which this training has had and of their agreement with the desiderata.

Basic principles

Within the scope of the first topic of inquiry, the principle of "workrelieving measures" can be regarded as a precondition

of the work which had to be done during the home study periods. The principles particularly dependent on this precondition are those of "studies by each trainee of his own school" and "contact with the local community". The other principles studies apply both to home study periods and to training courses.

Concerning the state of dependence referred to above, the findings show that most school management obtained a 10 per cent work load reduction but that the majority of them did not make use of this for their home study period. This is perhaps one reason why so few participants studied their own schools. Instead, the majority of school managers studied the school system in general. Concerning the development of contact with the local community, the findings suggest that contact between the school manager and the outside community existed partly through the medium of community training and field trips, but there are few indications of contact having occurred between schools and the local community. It is difficult here to draw any hard and fast conclusions, owing to the limitations of the questionnaire items. The participants may possibly have equated practical community training with other work relating to the development of co-operation between schools and the local community. It is also possible that my selection of working routines was less suitable to a sphere such as contact with the local community. For example, there was no facility available for marking the participation in school work of persons from outside the school. The most suitable working procedures have been used, however, though to a very slight extent. Only one-tenth of the school managers referred to these working procedures. Possibly this may be because most of them regarded practical community training as the training component coming under the heading of "developing contact with the local community".

Perhaps the time devoted to home studies was too short to include things outside the participant's own personality and professional role. We may also presume that the use made of the work load reduction kan affect the result. What I have in

mind here above all is the situation where the participant assembles his four hours per week into a single continuous period per term. An arrangement of this kind can influence the school manager's conceivable relations with staff and his opportunities of following up development work that has been set in train.

Another circumstance revealed by the findings is that most school managers have obtained reductions of teaching duties while a small proportion have obtained work load reductions by some other means. The fact of the majority obtaining a reducation of teaching duties does not necessarily imply that this is the best solution regarding home studies. The provisions contained by agreements on the subject may be another determinant. Those agreements provide that work load reductions are primarily to take the form of reduced teaching duties. If on the other hand the school manager does not have any teaching duties, the work load reduction can be effected by other means. One can of course ask whether the reverse ought not to apply, i.e. whether it is not the administrative duties that ought to be reduced in the first instance. Considering the aims of the training, it is of course vital for the school manager to be in touch with the classroom situation and the teaching staff, and contact of this kind is perhaps more easily maintained when the school manager still has teaching duties of his own.

Furthermore, other evaluation results (Ekholm-Hultman, 1978) have shown that after their training courses, school managers have arrears of administrative business waiting for them when they return to the school. This is a cause of irritation both to the school managers and to their staff, irritation which could be avoided to some extent by relieving the school manager of a portion of his administrative duties. The findings presented in this study also bear witness to the existence of this type of irritation.

The little use thus made of the work load reduction is bound to have a detrimental influence on the attainment of the goals laid down for the training. The work which has to be done during the home study periods constitutes a large proportion of the training. Two-thirds of the school managers stated that they had only devoted two hours per week or less to their home study tasks. One reason for this may quite simply be that it is hard to estimate the time devoted to work during the home study periods because this work coincides to a great extent with one's regular school duties. Another reason may be that so many participants obtained work load reductions in the form of reduced teaching duties, with the result that their administrative work load remained unaltered or else increased, in which case their home studies were presumably impeded.

As regards studies by the participants of their own schools and contacts with the local community, only half the school managers specified the way in which they worked during their home study periods. This may be because respondents found the question on this subject in the questionnaire difficult to answer, and it may be because respondents did not approach this task in any of the ways specified. The latter reason is not at all unlikely in view of the small amount of time devoted to home studies.

Thus certain preconditions of the achievement by the participants of a change in their own schools remain to a great extent unsatisfied. However, the preconditions relating to insight conserning the problems of schools in general are more adequately fulfilled.

This state of affairs also had the effect of limiting th subject matter which could be dealt with during the training courses. The follow-up of home study assignments during the training courses was probably more concerned, for example, with reading than with matters directly relating to conditions in the participants' schools.

The school managers also stated that in their opinion too little time had been available for work on their home assignments during the training courses. This may have been due to an oversight on the part of those in charge of the courses, or it may be due to an insufficiency of home study period material for discussion. Or, of course, the availability of insufficient time for planning and following up home assignments may in turn result in the latter being considered less important and therefore not being allotted the time they deserve.

The other principles studied are also dependent on the actual working time released by the 10 per cent work load reduction. The principle of participants' control is a case in point; findings on this subject show that the participants did not feel that they exerted any influence on the training courses but that the majority felt that they influenced their home study periods. The influence exerted during the home study periods mainly concerned actvities focussing on the individual trainee, since few respondents stated that they had studied their own schools and the staff there.

Secondly, this influence related to a portion of the training which came to occupy only half the length of time envisaged. The training courses occupied 25 days and the home study periods 35 days (35 weeks/year with 10 per cent work load reduction = 4 hours/week), and the practical community training occupied 20 days. One reason for this is that the participants did not utilize the work load reduction they obtained or, putting the matter rather differently, they were not in a position to utilize the work load reduction.

This finding indicates that the range of the training is limited to the individual school manager as a person, an inference which is corroborated by the circumstances discussed earlier, i.e. the limited utilization of the work load reduction measures, the purely general study made of the individual school, the

establishment of contact between the school manager and the local community only, and the limitation of the influence exerted by the school managers to matters relating to themselves personally during the home study periods.

This picture is reinforced by those portions of the findings which relate to the principle of co-operation. Here it transpires that few school managers collaborated with colleagues or staff, and only a few collaborated with other school managers in their municipalities. On the other hand, several school managers stated that they had attended more than three municipal group meetings, which in itself was a prerequisite of co-operation. But it is doubtful whether constructive use was made of these opportunities, because the school managers expressed doubts concerning the point of such meetings. The school will not necessarily fail to be transformed merely because the school manager does not co-operate, but there will presumably be a greater risk of the measures taken conflicting with each other. Those who did not co-operate have partially taken precautions against this by either holding joint planning sessions or discussing their work before travelling to the next course.

As regards the principle of variegated and activating working procedures, the findings show on the whole that variegated working procedures existed but that activating working procedures were confined to the training courses. Group work predominates during the training courses. The few respondents specifying the working procedures employed during their home study periods tended for the most part to report working procedures involving themselves alone. These findings also suggest that the training comprised training course work and individual work during the home study periods. We may add that the degree of activity can be bound up with the content of the group discussions. Most of the school managers clearly interpreted the group discussions as being free from specific requirements. A higher level of requirements can have a very considerable effect on the participants' activity.

One reason for desiring variegated and activating working procedures during the training courses is that a model will thus be provided for work during the home study periods. Obviously, this has not worked out in practice. The school managers also stated that the working procedures during the training courses had only been partially utilized. Presumably this means that the immediate effects of the training will be slight when it comes to transforming the school system as a whole.

The principle of a problem-solving attitude has achieved little manifestation in the training. This is apparent from the fact, revealed by the findings, that only a small number of the school managers joined forces, in the course of their group discussions during the training courses, in drawing up a plan of action for work in their own schools. This is understandable, of course, because we know that few school managers undertook studies of their own schools and that many of them felt that too little time was available for work on their home assignments during the training courses. Similarly, only a few respondents reported a change in their relations with school staff as regards discussions of their own schools and what could be done about them.

The principle of giving and taking criticism is aimed at a critical appraisal by the individual school manager of the activities of his own school. A majority of the school leaders stated that they had engaged in a critical appraisal of their own schools, but most of them had done so in a manner which involved themselves more than the school staff. The initiative behind the critical appraisal had come from themselves or from a colleague. This also reflects a centering of things on the school manager, which in turn can be related to those findings showing that about half the school managers had incurred criticism during some part of the training but that few were criticized for pursuing new ideas. One can see that few participants were criticized for trying to change things, which is not very surprising since the school managers did not involve themselves at school in work implying a critical appraisal affecting the staff.

Those who did not incur any criticism during the home study periods - and this applies to a majority of the school managers - may be persons who initiated a change of activities in their schools, a possible reason for their not being criticized for their efforts being that the members of the school simply accepted the new scheme of things. But this does not tally with the way in which one expects individual persons and organizations to react to the introduction of changes. The likeliest explanation for the absence of criticism is that school activities are proceeding a long the same lines as before the training began.

As regards criticism during the training courses, few respondents stated that they had been criticized for unwillingness to accept the new thoughts and ideas. This could mean that the new thoughts and ideas were accepted by the other school managers. Or it could mean that only a small number clearly declared their lack of confidence in the new order of things, thus incurring the criticism of those who were of a different persuasion. This need not imply that the latter were particularly numerous.

The absence of criticism during the training courses can be taken to signify that the participants were not subjected to very profound conditioning - or indoctrination, if that term should be preferred. If the trainers really pursued a clearly pronounced line and, moreover, evoked critical viewpoints conserning that line, a discussion would be sure to materialize. There would then be more chance of criticism and self-criticism than in the case of these school managers. This was probably the situation which prevailed, since the majority of the school managers did not come in for any criticism during the training courses.

Of course, group discussions can be both active and interesting without containing criticism or self-criticism. If no deliberate effort is made to discuss the participants' opinions concerning the ideology conveyed by the content and working procedures of the training, the participants can easily complete the training without having adopted any standpoint for or against. A participant who has not actively adopted a standpoint of this kind

is very prone to retain his or her original attitude. Even somebody who is against the new ideas is perhaps nonetheless prepared to try them out in his vocational role, since this is expected of a school manager. But deliberations of this kind are less likely to occur in the absence of a confrontation between one's own opinions and those of other people.

Summing up, criticism was thus given and taken to a certain extent both during the training courses and during the home study periods, but not to a sufficient extent to exert any considerable influence on the participants.

The principle of interchange of experience was operative during the training, because the findings show that work in small groups predominated, added to which the school managers stated that they had compared notes during groups discussions and also, to some extent, in writing. The findings also indicate, however, that this interchange of experience was not always attuned to the goals of the training. This is not to say that a great many of the things discussed were irrelevant to the training, but rather that discussions often centred round matters to which the participants spontaneously attached importance. Presumably this means that the participants did not always discuss problems in the sense of starting, for example, with a given theme or given questions.

The interchange of experience which took place during the group discussions was seldom put to constructive use in the sense of leading to a concrete plan of action for work in schools. Possibly the school managers were left to their own devices in this respect, a surmise which is also borne out by their feeling that there was insufficient time available for discussing problems from the home study periods.

The link-up between training courses and home study periods worked well in one respect, since the school managers felt

that they were able to some extent to utilize the content and working procedures of the training courses during their home study periods. The reference here must be to working procedures which the school manager was able to utilize on his own behalf, and not to those requiring the involvement of school staff.

As mentioned earlier, many respondents felt that too little time had been devoted to home study problems during the training courses.

Contacts with the training team functioned satisfactorily in terms of the various tasks which the trainers were expected to perform. Although contact existed with the training team, an analysis should be made of the way in which this contact operated during the various stages of training.

During the training courses, contact was partly maintained by means of participation in group discussions. The training team often participated in these discussions, but while participating actively they avoided deliberately steering the discussions. This may be the reason why so few respondents felt that the group discussions led to a concrete plan of action for the individual school and that the discussions touched on a little of everything. The participants were nonetheless aware that the trainers demanded active commitment, and perhaps this led to the participants knowing that they ought to be active but never being sure of the type of activity needed and the concrete results expected of the various discussions. A situation of this kind is very liable to prompt the interpretation that everything is all right so long as one is active. But since there is a relatively clear target, a trainer has to be constantly steering towards that target. Failing this, confusion and inaction are liable to result.

During the four home study periods, two-thirds of the participants received up to two home visits. This can also be viewed

in relation to the fact, already mentioned, that the school managers devote so little time to home studies. An increase in the number of home visits can presumably enhance the school managers' interest in their home study assignments.

Presumably the manner in which the school managers interpret their contact with the trainers and, secondly, the enthusiasm which they show for their home study assignments do not hinge entirely on the number of home visits. The way in which the home visits are organized is also important. Many school managers describe their home visits as a situation in which the trainer acted as a "discussion partner", the implication being that of an interview in which problems connected with the training were discussed and efforts were made to find solutions to them. These home visits were considered meaningful. Some school managers received home visits of the "free and easy" variety, i.e. the conversation touched on various matters relating to school but no real problems connected with the training were discussed. These respondents were somewhat more sceptical of the usefulness of this situation. Altogether my findings show that roughly half the school managers were faced with a situation implying a pronounced demand or taking the form of a problem-centred discussion.

The number of home visits and the way in which they are conducted may possibly exert positive influence on the involvement of the school managers. The findings clearly suggest a relationship between trainers and school managers presenting elements of permissiveness in the direct interaction occurring during training courses and during home study periods.

Desirable effects

The second point of inquiry for the evaluation concerns the educational effects aimed for. These effects are concerned with the school manager as a person, with his professional role

and with the individual school. These things are presumably interdependent in such a way that the training is designed to influence school development by transforming the personality of the school management.

The majority of respondents stated that they had personally experienced changes in both attitudes and behaviour. But to their knowledge this had not been observed by those around them.

Half the school managers felt that their professional role had to some extent acquired new content, while some of them maintained that their duties had been extensively transformed. But no reaction on the part of other people had been observed in this case either. As regards the transformation of duties, it should be pointed out that only one-fifth stated that the change of duties had entailed their going to the extent of trying to transform their own schools.

Half the respondents also reported a positive transformation of their schools, but here again, no reaction was reported on the part of those around them. Concerning the transformation of schools, only a minority reported having seen concrete changes, e.g. changes in teaching. The most conspicuous feature is a generally positive disposition towards change. Clearly, the influence discerned did not include the students or the majority of staff members but was confined to individual teachers, individual persons concerned with student welfare and individual students.

It is, of course, to be expected that, even if the school manager makes a really noticeable change to his behaviour, this will not always lead to a reaction which is audible to himself. The reaction may be no less vehement. The failure of the school manager to notice it is also connected with the traditional feedback in the school community of reactions to the things done by the school manager. It is also conceivable that different changes on the part of the school manager will give rise to

different reactions, some of them positive and others negative. The positive reactions are not passed on, because the behaviour giving rise to them does not offend anybody. The negative reactions lie smouldering, but they are not generally passed on either, because people are generally unwilling to complain, especially about their head. But once again, this training is aimed at meeting and tackling problems existing in school, including those entailed by participation in the training. Presumably, therefore, the training has influenced the attitudes of school management, but equally presumably, no major change has occurred in the behaviour of school management. These conclusions must be taken with a pinch of salt, because the underlying documentation is too thin to support any reliable pronouncements.

Changes in the duties of school management have not elicited any reactions on the part of those around them. The reason for this absence of reaction can be stated in the same terms as were employed concerning personal change, above. We may note that few school managers devote more time to such tasks as making demands, providing feedback, establishing a comprehensive view and taking initiatives. If the intentions behind the training had come to fruition and led to a process of change, more time should also have been spent on these duties. Otherwise one might suppose that an increase in the distribution of managerial tasks would demand more extensive control, since the school manager remains responsible for the direction of activities.

Part of the reason why no extensive changes have been observed in the individual school may be that training has only affected the school manager. But this transformation did not lead to wider conditioning involving large sectors of the school as a whole, which is understandable considering the small amount of time which we know the school managers to have devoted to home studies.

Another explanation is that it takes a long time to change an organization. Some researchers advise us to regard five years as a reasonable space of time for such purposes. This would imply that the aim of transforming schools is an unrealistic one for two years' training, and indeed the goal documents for the training state that it is divided into basic training and continuous, annually recurrent subsequent training. Even if the training is divided up in this way, the general aims remain the same. This subsequent training is the means whereby efforts are made to keep in touch with the school after the school manager has completed his basic training.

The experience presented in this evaluation is confined to the basic training, which in the above-mentioned five-year perspective can be considered an important prerequisite of further developments in the school sector.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

The concluding reflections on the subject of school management training employ two perspectives: firstly, that of the aims defined for this training, and secondly, the interpretation generally stated by the school managers.

In relation to its aims and objectives, the training has been partly conducted along the lines which were desirable. An interchange of experience has been achieved, and so have good contacts between school managers and their trainers. But the contacts established are perhaps open to discussion with reference to the effects intended. Presumably they can be improved so as to achieve closer steering by the trainers, though this need not entail an authoritarian approach which would be contrary to the underlying intentions of the training. Successes in relation to the other principles embodied by the training have been more limited, the dominant impression here being that the training has only reached the individual school manager as a person. The

development of the professional role and the development of the individual school have been only marginally affected. This is understandable, since we know that the school managers have not devoted very much time to work concerning their own schools.

In terms of the school managers' general views of it, the training may be termed highly successful, since the majority considered large portions of the training to have been meaningful. The municipal group meetings were the only factor that aroused scepticism. The school managers who had studied the training documents felt that their content was meaningful, added to which there were few who advocated any alterations. The latter may of course be due to the difficulty involved in suggesting changes without first being informed of their permissible scope, but not many respondents stated, for example, that they wanted more administration, which is a familiar field to the participants and could therefore have been mentioned.

These two conclusions - deficient goal achievement and satisfied school managers - may seem paradoxical, but they can be explained. The reason for the school managers being satisfied with the training is presumably that most of them found it meaningful. And the training has affected the school managers as persons. As long as the training has only involved the school managers and a few members of their staffs, it is unlikely to arouse very much discontent. Other reactions can be expected, on the other hand, when the development of the vocational role and of school as an organization comes to be emphasized. These reactions have not been manifested in the training evaluated here, because this training has to a certain extent been characterized by an absence of demands on the participants. A discussion is needed here concerning the true possiblities open to the trainers of making demands and then following them up both during the training courses and during the home study periods. Does the number of trainers genuinely able to devote themselves to these activities constitute a large enough resource, considering the number of school managers and the desirable number of home visits? What practical possibilities do the school

managers have of rising to the demands which ought to be made in relation to the aims and objects of the training, even if allowance is also made for staff team training and the other aspects of the SIA school. Are these measures so powerful that schools can be transformed now? A great deal of effort has been devoted to this end during the past thirty years, and changes have occurred, but teaching still remains unaltered to a considerable extent.

Other evaluations of similar training schemes and of the results of team training and transformation experiments in schools have shown that changes in depth are very difficult to establish (Hultman, 1978; Ekholm-Hultman, 1978; Hultman, 1980[x]).

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